

## **LACDMH AND JACKIE LACEY DISCUSS JAIL DIVERSION PROGRAMS AT LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST**

**By Kimberli Washington, Public Information Office**



Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Director Marvin Southard, D.S.W., and Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey, J.D., joined together for a legislative breakfast to discuss a LA County jail diversion plan, on Friday, December 12, 2014 at Junior Blind of America in Los Angeles. The event was sponsored by the LACDMH Service Area 5 and 6 Advisory Committees and the L.A. County Mental Health Commission.

Attendees included the Women's Jail Integration Program, Culver City Police Department, Marina Del Rey Sheriff's Office, Inglewood Police Department, Assembly member Sebastian Ridley-Thomas and Kathleen Austria, Deputy for Mental Health and Homeless issues for Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas.

The event began with a welcome and introduction of elected officials by the master of ceremonies, Herman L. DeBose, Ph.D., Vice Chair of the Los Angeles County Mental Health Commission. The morning presentation was on "Diversion Services for Mental Health Consumers in Our Local Criminal Justice System," and focused on different treatment options available rather than incarceration.

LACDMH Director Marvin Southard discussed five goals that the department is focusing on: pre-booking diversion programs, Superior Court diversion programs, treatment in jail, jail discharge plans and uniting those released from jail with family, faith-based treatment and safe housing.



“The key is training law enforcement and having a readily available place to take people instead of jail. We need to evaluate the needs of those in LA County, identify available resources and coordinate diversion programs,” stated Jackie Lacey.

District Attorney Jackie Lacey spoke about her office’s approach to jail diversion by looking at how other cities are diverting people out of jail and into help. She also discussed the Countywide Mental Health Summit held in May 2014 and how it helped identify several needs and priorities affecting those with mental illness. She talked about seven goals she was focusing on: training all criminal justice professionals, expanding crisis treatment centers, implementing a data study to examine needs of those with mental health and substance abuse, improving communication between all partners so people get the help needed, developing policies and procedures, creating more crisis centers and finding supportive housing.

Tristan Scremin, SAAC 5, and Reba Stevens, SAAC 6, both spoke about their lived experience and recovery process. The event concluded with a question and answer period with Marvin Southard and Jackie Lacey.

